

ATTRITION AND PERSISTENCE REPORT

IC 20-1-18.4-8

This section of the Indiana code requires the Department of Education (DOE) to submit a report on the attrition and persistence rates of students enrolled in secondary vocational (career-technical) education. Data that would be needed to complete this type of report have never been collected by either the DOE or the Department of Workforce Development (DWD). While enrollment data in the courses labeled Career-Technical Education (CTE) are submitted annually, there are several difficulties in correlating enrollment data to program completion rates:

1. Not all students provide social security numbers when enrolling in CTE courses or programs complicating attempts to do any long-term tracking.
2. A common definition for “program completer” does not exist. DWD, the primary data collection point for CTE programs, allows area vocational districts to use a local definition for “completers.”
3. CTE programs include a wide variety of elective courses that award from 1 to 4 credits each semester. Because these courses are electives, students enroll for different reasons. Some have a specific career goal in mind and are typically the program completers. Others are using these courses to explore different occupations and may never complete a full training sequence. A third category of students includes those who plan on enrolling in a 2- or 4-year college degree program and who take a few CTE courses as preparation for post-high school studies. No data on the reasons students select or opt out of these courses has ever been collected.

In addition to the lack of data, it has been discussed that the language requiring this report was originally intended to collect information on postsecondary technical enrollments and degree completion rates. A recommendation to eliminate this requirement during the next legislative session has been submitted.

Although data collection issues exist, CTE programs have had many successes over the last decade.

- Annually, between 35% - 40% of all high school students take at least one career-technical education course.
- Academic standards, developed with input from business and industry representatives and postsecondary partners, are in place for approximately 90% of the courses.
- 3 science-based CTE courses have been approved by the Commission on Higher Education and the State Board of Education as Core 40 and Academic Honors Diploma science courses. By the end of this school year, it is expected that an additional CTE course will also be approved for science credit for the advanced diploma options.

- Data is collected annually to document Indiana's progress in meeting the federal Core Indicators of Performance required under the Carl D. Perkins Act. Each year, Indiana has successfully met the target percentages established for CTE accountability in the following areas: academic attainment; skill attainment; graduation; placement; and student participation in programs not traditional for their gender.
- Numerous programs/courses have been articulated with 2 and 4-year postsecondary institutions making it possible for students to graduate with credits that count towards an associate or baccalaureate degree.
- Over 130 middle and high school programs developing skills and knowledge in pre-engineering have been implemented since 2000.
- Students are being encouraged to complete and excel in exams that lead to nationally recognized certification in areas such as information technology, automotive technology, and, computer networking and repair. To promote this effort, DOE and Ivy Tech State College are sharing payment of a state fee to secure exams at reduced costs to Indiana students.
- A new, rigorous diploma will be in place for students entering high school in Fall, 2006. Named the Core 40 with Technical Honors Diploma, this option will require that students demonstrate both academic and technical skill attainment through measures such as: a graduation GPA of "B" or better; no grade lower than a "C" in courses counting towards the diploma; accrual of 8-10 credits from one technical area; and receipt of a state-recognized certification related to the technical area of concentration.
- In partnership with DWD, career majors and career academy initiatives are being implemented in high schools and career centers around the state. Career academies prepare students for postsecondary degree programs as well as employment by combining rigorous academic courses with technical classes. Academies have been developed in the following areas: information technology; finance; pre-engineering; travel/tourism; health sciences; and, hotel/lodging management.

Long range plans for CTE include a focus on expanding the delivery of career academies and other models that blend academic and technical education to a broader range of students. Expansion of articulation agreements that promote completion of a significant number of credits counting towards an associate or baccalaureate degree is a high priority. Another important objective is for CTE programs to contribute to Indiana's high school reform efforts by expanding programs that provide student-focused learning opportunities and activities that relate academic concepts to real-world problems. An additional objective is to capitalize on the successes of the pre-engineering program known as Project Lead the Way by adapting this model to other technical areas such as biomedical/life sciences programs, entrepreneurship, and business.